A CHRISTMAS CAROL.

BY G. W. CROFTS.

Long years ago o'er Judea's plains
Tears flashed celestial light,
And the shepherd's heard angelic strains
Steal on the air of night.

"Peace was the burden of that song,
Peace and good will to men,"
It floated up the stars among,
Then earthward rolled again.

It told of him who then was born,
A Babe in Bethlehem,
The herald of a brighter morn.
With godlen diadem.

O, angel choir with voices sweet,
Well might ye sing that night,
For God and heaven and men meet,
And darkness felt the light.

Well might ye sing, for sin and death
Will find their pale and wane,
Met with the Savior's first drawn breath
A mighty conqueror.

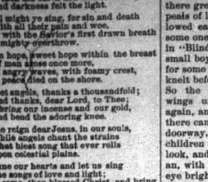
Then hope, sweet hope within the breast
Of man arose once more,
And angry passions sank to rest,
In peace died on the shore.

Sweet angels, thanks a thousandfold;
And thanks, dear Lord, to Thee,
We bring our incense and our gold,
And bend the adoring knee.

Come reign dear Jesus, in our souls,
While angels chant the anthems
Of that blest song that ever rolls
Upon celestial plains.

Attune our hearts and let us sing
The songs of love and light;
And chant, then bless our Christ, and bring
Thy peace to us to night.

An Old Time Christmas.

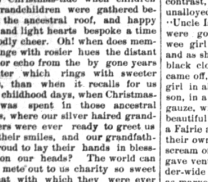


GIRLS and boys, all, who care to listen to my story, a description of a Christmas of "ye olden time." It was before the war, that "golden age" when, according to some whose memories can recall it, even the moon shone more brightly, and the sun beamed more warmly on this southland of ours; however, now that the clouds of war have rolled away, we will not believe that our defeat, despite the gloom with which it has enwrapped us, has dimmed the glory of the moon, or diminished the splendor of the sun, but will on with our story of the roseate past.

The scene was in Virginia, at one of those old, and we might almost say—Baronial Halls, owned by a famous old Virginia gentleman, who dispensed with open hand and genial hospitality the bounty and blessings of his royal home; such was the Hon. William Shackelford, a man wonderfully well preserved, and seeming young, though his locks were sprinkled by the touch of time, and he fast nearing the allotted "three-score-years-and-ten." 'Twas Christmas-tide when children and grandchildren were gathered beneath the ancestral roof, and happy faces and light hearts bespoke a time of goodly cheer. Oh! when does memory more fondly rester than the distant past, or echo from the by gone years laughter which rings with sweeter music, than when it recalls for us those olden days, when our Christmastide was spent in those ancestral homes, where our silver haired grandmothers were ever ready to greet us with their smiles, and our grandfathers prond to lay their hands in blessings on our heads? The world can never mete out to us charity so sweet as that which then was ours, we only wont to cloak our childish faults, or stand as ready to lend an added lustre to the good deeds of our lives. But so prone am I to pay a tribute to those grand old people, of whose like I fear there can be no forgetfulness, that I am wandering from my story.

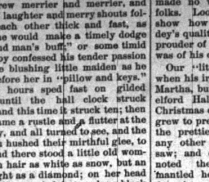
Now, Grandpa and Grandma Shackelford had four daughters and three sons, and when they all came, each bringing their little flock, for Christmas tide, it made a numerous group, for there were in all twenty grand children. Oh! how the little folks hailed with delight the coming of this holiday, for grandfather always had some surprise on hand for them; we shall see what it was this year. All Christmas-day the little folks were on tip-toe, wondering what would come at night, for Christmas night was their time. At dinner, when the table was laden with dainties, the little ones were so busy listening to see if they could overhear some word that would give a clue to what was coming, that they scarcely did justice to the meal. The old darkey, "Uncle Isaac" always knew everything, so they clustered around his knees and begged to know; each making a vow of secrecy, but he only chuckled to himself and said, making a run at them as he said it, "Git away, young marsters and missises, I ain't gwine to tell you: you jes wait, it's gwine ter be de fines' thing ever you seen."

Late that evening though, after the young people had borne patiently, or rather impatiently, all day the knowing look on all the old folks faces, grandpa called them into what was known as the drawing room, and they eagerly gathered around him, when he held up his finger and said: "Now when I count three, everybody must be still—here goes—one, two, three!" and hard as it was, by the time that "three" was out, you might have heard a pin drop.



"NOW WHEN I COUNT THREE."

"Well," said Grandpa, "its going to be a great big party! All the neighbors and the neighbors' children are coming." A cry of delight went up from some, but on other little faces there was a look of disappointment, and one little girl (girls always speak out you know) said with infinite feeling, "Oh, Dranpa! no trismus tree wid lots of bufful slings on it, and you 'Santa Taus?'" "No, no!" said Grandpa with a shake of the head but a twinkle of the eyes that would have betrayed to older heads that all was not told yet, and it wasn't as well see. The little ones dispersed to the corners for the party, and "ole mammy," who had nursed all these little folks and "dare 'mand" and "spas," and "Uncle Isaac," who felt that he owned "ole marster" and the young ones too, instead of their owning him, looked so pleased, that anybody, even the little folks, could see that they were enjoying the so "ole mammy" went from room to room and stood with arms akimbo, and looked with satisfaction and an air of possession on first one and then another group, while she nodded her kerchiefed head to give emphasis to her words, and said "you's God's own child'ns." The little ones



THE GOOD FARIE.

stood and gladdened every little heart as she bestowed each token. Just behind her stood, in most unfairy-like contrast, but with faces bright with unalloyed joy, "Uncle Isaac" and "Uncle Isaac" and when all the gifts were gone the "goode Fairie" bade wee girl to touch her with the wand, and as she did, the hall that did the black cloak drapery, the white hair came off, and there stood the prettiest girl in all the county, Dorothy Jefferson, in a spangled dress, and wings of gauze, with a star and crown on her beautiful head, and looking as veritable a Fairie as though she had sprung from their own mystic realm. Oh! what a scream of delight the merry throng gave vent to as they gazed with wonder-wide eyes upon this transformation, as marvellous to them as the speedy transportation of Cinderella from the chimney-corner in her rags, to the glittering grandeur of the Prince's ballroom, arrayed in royal robes, and grandpa's eyes danced with glee, and he looked young again in spite of his white hair and the wrinkles on his brow. After the wild excitement of this scene had subsided, the "Goode Fairie" in black cloak dropped the white apron, and with his courtly elegance, announced supper, and such a supper as it was. Grandpa and grandma led the way to the dining room and there was the great big table laden with everything that children care for, with pop-kisses strewn everywhere, and such a popping as the girls and boys did have, but now a funny thing happened over these kisses that begins the sequel to my story. Each pop-kiss, you know, contains a verse, and Henry Harris took from one of his a very sentimental verse, one that framed a proposition in better language than Henry Harris knew himself, but with it he popped the question to pretty Martha Jefferson (the little sister of the 'goode Fairie'). Now William Shackleford, little William as he was called, looked upon this stately little lady as his own especial property, and his anger or jealousy was immediately aroused. "Little William' was just old enough and had read enough of the ways of older folks to assume as far as he knew how, a position as gallant and daring, so he steps up to Master Henry and tells him that he would like to see him in the hall. Now this was literally the 'deserted hall' when these two very young swains stepped out into it, for everybody else well anchored for a time in the dining-room, and the merry din of these voices drowned the angry noise of the two boys outside. William demanded of Henry what he meant by giving a verse to his sweetheart; whereupon Henry denied his right to the claim he made, and said she liked him best anyhow. Words grew hot and high, but when he found himself in William's power, and in addition his best clothes being torn from him, he called lustily for help; and soon came, the party, and looked out in amazement on the scene and separated the two combatants. The parents of each were deeply mortified and demanded of their sons the disagreement, whereupon with stammering tongue and reddening cheek each one confessed his grievance; and pretty little Dorothy Jefferson, when she became conscious of her part in it was much abashed and shed little tears. She was soon consoled, though, and not long the young folks dispersed with nothing to mar the happiness of this wonderful Christmas party but this little "sham battle" affair between the youngsters. William and the rest of the little folks were ordered off to bed; William, so far as he knew, in disgrace, but his heart would not have been so heavy could he have heard grandpa's hearty laugh as he said: "Chip of the old block, made of the right stuff; I'd have done the same for you, Mary," turning to the handsome old matron who was "mother" to "the big chimney corner. All joined the laugh over the little affair, and then good nights were said and soon Shackleford Hall was wrapped in slumber. Now but one person rescued a trophy from this well-fought field, and that was "old Uncle Isaac." As he passed through that "deserted hall" that night he picked up the much injured collar of poor Henry's coat, and with a significant grunt, while he muttered to himself: "Dat boy jes like his pa," he stuck it in his pocket, and when he reached his quarters, and "ole Mammy" sat down to talk over the day, he drew it out and said: "Sarah, you see dis collar? Well, if de Lord spare me dat long, I'se gwine to keep dis til dat boy's weddin' day, and den I gwine gif 'ter his wife, jes' to show her how he did fight for de ladies, long 'fore he knowed what dey was. Then he gave a chuckle and three of his significant grunts, each accompanied by that vigorous nod of the head peculiar to the old darkey, and that the young William's escapade had revived afresh his family pride, he exclaimed, "Lord knows he ain't never made no white folks ashamed of de folks. Look like he jes' warn't to show how fine he could mek' 'em; dey's quality;!" and no king was ever prouder of his crown than 'ole Isaac!' was of his owners.

Our "little William" was fourteen when his ire was so aroused for pretty Martha, but he came back to "Shackelford Hall" still another year for the Christmas came, and "pretty Martha" grew to prettier Martha, and then to the prettiest Martha or any girl by any other name that William ever saw, and the olden heads locked on and noted the conscious blush that mantled her cheek and the coquettish drooping of "pretty Martha's" eyes when the chivalrous William would draw near; and, finally, seven years had gone by, and William came, a young man of twenty-one, to spend Christmas and to claim his bride, and this pretty maiden of nineteen of the love that had been in his heart, and for which he had fought seven years before; and the folks nodded their wise heads for his disgrace that she had cried. "I cried for love," she said, and here we draw the curtain; suffice it to say they were betrothed, and it was determined that when the next Christmas rolled around they should make a long holiday of it and have a wedding-feast; and so the next year all the country-side was bidden, and for some, both old and young, had gone, gathered again at old "Shackelford Hall" and had the round of Christmas-gaieties, and the last night of January was spread the "marriage feast," and grandpa and grandma, both grown now to a ripe old age, were there, and some others, to bid them well and see that this would be their last Christmas-tide on earth, and well they could not, for it was a gladsome time, and their old hearts were merry as 'va marriage bell." The solemn words of the church were said, the knot was tied, and these young people started on the road o'er which the old ones had travelled when young and apply together. During the evening "ole Uncle Isaac," whom "Gord did pass space," slipped up to young "Marse William," Uncle Isaac's pet, and the laugh spread over his wrinkled countenance, and said, "Here, tek' dis; dis de collar you to' off Marse Henry's coat dat night when you and him fought dat fight. I tole yo' 'ole Mammy' dat ev'y night dat if Gord spared me I was gwine to save it an' gif ter you de day you was married, jes' to show yo' how I 'member you 'cause (like de ladies when you warn' nothin' but a boy," and then catching his chin in his hand, he looked in an amused way at William for a reply. "Well, I 'clar 'fore Gord! ef you ain done marry dat very little gal you was fightin' bout den," and William laughed as he tucked the dilapidated collar in his pocket and showed his gratification over the faithful old darkey's affection for him, by giving him a warm grip of the hand, and looking fondly into his face, said: "Well, Uncle Isaac, don't you think she was worth fighting for? Look at her again." Uncle Isaac, still grasping his "young marster's" hand, glanced shyly at the fair young bride and said, "Yes sah! yes sah! she is dat; she's fair as de day itself, Lord sholy smiled 'pon her." And William and Martha had a genuine laugh over the treasured trophy.

Now years rolled by and grandpa and grandma passed away, then William's own mother and father were taken, and William and Martha came to old 'Shackleford Hall,' and fair-haired daughters and brave-browed sons of theirs grew up around the same old hearth-stone, and as Christmas time drew near, William would always do in the ever circling years, William and Martha concluded that they would bring back the happy long-ago, and have a party for the neighbors and the neighbors' children, among whom was Henry Harris, who had married long ago, and had his little folks to help swell the throng. Among other 'great big party,' and another 'Goodie Fairie,' with her basket again, the most beautiful girl of all the country, and this time through the agency of a letter, the daughter of the pretty Mildred Jefferson, who had played the part before, and they had the big supper in the same old dining-room, and when the time came through for the supper, William called a silence and said, "Now little folks, the last 'Goodie Fairie' party we had at 'Shackleford Hall,' two young men got into an awful fight, now this one is going to wind up in the story of that awful fight," and he told his children and the children of all the neighbors' children who were there in that long ago, of how he and Henry came to blows, and when he drew out that collar, how the little ones, especially the boys, gave a scream with laughter. "But," said William, "this 'Goodie Fairie Party' can't be like that because there's no William and Henry here who would' have such bad manners as to fight, you are better than your fathers were, and if you wasn't, there would be no 'ole Uncle Isaac' here to pick up the dilapidated collar and cherish it until your wedding day; and as William made this allusion to 'ole Uncle Isaac" for the first time that day a sudden tear dimmed the eyes and a tear-drop glistened on his eye, a touching tribute to the faithful old soul, whose memory was indeed sacred to all the household, and the mention of this was found in the old burying-ground where lay "ole Mammy" and "Uncle Isaac;" they rested not beneath negro-like mounds, but were laid in soft sweet as those which bloomed above the ones whom they had served so well, blossomed and shed their fragrance on the quiet air around their narrow beds; and many an evening when William's little one's gathered around the blazing hearth to listen to tales and anecdotes of his boyhood days, the good deeds of "Uncle Isaac" and "ole Mammy" were told as a memorial of them, and their sayings and expressions were by-words in the household. Never was there affection truer, more unselfish and tenderness, or more beautiful in its simplicity than that of the old darkeys for their owners, and they in turn, were loved by them with a devotion and sincere regard. But some of these good times have been since the war, and that is why those few old people who can remember those happy days of peace and plenty, almost feel that even the glory of the sun and moon is dimmed.—Sunny South.

The Fox sisters have "given up the ghost," so to speak.

CHRISTMAS CAROL.

BY R. G. W'ARTHUR.

Christmas with its glee and gladness
Comes again with hallowed morn,
Dissipating gloom and sadness,
Telling that the Christ is born.

Bidding us no longer cherish
Doubts and fears within the breast,
But instead the hope to nourish
With a faith in Him at rest.

For the Savior comes to listen,
Heeding long, the weary cry,
Burdened hearts of grief to lighten,
Wand'ring souls of's way to show.

Telling of a full salvation,
By repentance, child like trust;
By a life of consecration,
Thrusting thoughts from worldly dust.

Let us then with great rejoicing
Hail the day the Christ was born.
Cease the night, the day arising;
Beautiful the glow of morn.

THE FIRST CHRISTMAS TREE IN NEW ENGLAND.

BY SARAH J. PRITCHARD.

'Twas in the year 1635. On a November afternoon Mrs. Rachel Olcott was spinning flax in the cheerful kitchen of a small house not far from Plymouth Rock, in Massachusetts. Eastward from the house, the ocean tossed with a sullen roar on the rocks of the coast below; northward lay the few homes of the few Pilgrims who were Mrs. Olcott's neighbors.

Captain Olcott's ship had sailed from Boston for England, in the year 1632, and had not been heard from.

The little band of Pilgrims had ceased to look for news from the captain or his ship.

Mrs. Olcott kept up a brave heart and a cheerful face for the sake of her four children, Robert, Rupert, Lucy, and poor, crippled little Roger; but this November afternoon anxiety filled her heart. Day by day her little store of provisions had lessened under the stress of hunger until even the scanty meal had vanished, and it became necessary to send corn to be ground at the only mill in all that region. Early in the day, Robert and Rupert and their sister Lucy had been sent to the miller's, for it was well understood that each corner must await his turn at the mill. This grinding of the corn on days was slow work, and much of the day had passed before Mrs. Olcott expected them to return.

But when the sky grew dark and the snow began to fall, the loving mother grew anxious. She drew the great arm chair, in the cushioned depths of which poor, pale-faced little Roger lay curled, to the side of the cheerful fire, when anxiety grew to fear, she threw the hooded red cloak that all the Puritan matrons wore, and hurried over the hill to the house of her nearest neighbor, Master John Hawley.

As she drew the latch and walked in with impetuous haste, up sprung John Hawley and stalked to the corner where, ever ready stood his trusty musket.

"Indians, Rachel?" shrieked Mrs. Hawley, springing to drop the curtain that hung above the one window of the room.

"Put up your musket, friend," gasped the startled boy to whom he are in danger. They went to the mill with grist. Lucy is with them. Oh, save them!" she pleaded.

"They're young and tough; they'll weather it through, and be home by supper time," said John Hawley, the staunch Puritan, dropping his musket to its corner. "I'll step over after supper and see what's detained Mrs. Hawley."

To him, nothing less than Indians seemed worth a moment's uneasiness.

When he turned, Rachel Olcott was gone, and he saw her, in the gloom, watching the red cloak as its wearer urged it through through the snow.

"A woman has no business to look as she does," exclaimed Mrs. Hawley, closing the door.

"She's had trouble enough in Plymouth, goodness knows!—her husband lost, and that crippled child to care for night and day. These boys bring up, and hardly enough money to keep soul and body together. And there she goes this minute with a face like a sweet brier rose," and John Hawley demanded his supper at once.

He had it, his wife looking as stern as any Puritan of them all, as he put on his great coat and went out saying:

"If those youngsters have come home, I'll be great'n' back."

But he was not "right back." Midnight came down on all the Atlantic coast, and he had not returned.

The supper for the young Olcotts was baked at the hearth, and set back to await their coming. The blazing logs filled the long, low kitchen with light. There was no need of a candle, as the

THE DISCOVERY.

mother sat, to sing her poor boy to sleep. For Roger could not sleep.

"Tell me something more about Eng land, mother," he pleaded, again and again. "It keeps me from thinking of Lucy and Rupert, when you talk."

The firelight illumined the white face and made the blue eyes of the boy more pitiful than ever in their plaintive asking that night.

The mother's thoughts and her heart went out in the snowdrifts searching with her neighbors for her bright, rosy darlings, but her words and her hands were mindful of the little herself of almost everything belonging to the outside world of work and endeavor.

"Well, then, Roger, shut your eyes and try to go to sleep, while I tell you something about Christmas—the way we used to keep it—before mamma was a Puritan, you know."

Then she told the boy of old-time customs in her native land; of her father's house, and the great rejoicings that came at Christmas time, and lastly, with a vague feeling of regret, she came to the story of the great branches of evergreen, lighted with tapers and hung with gifts for the good children.

"What made you be a Puritan, Mother?" "Couldn't you stay at home?" asked Roger.

"Don't ask me, my boy," she said, touching the shining face with a kiss. "Remember that heaven is a much finer place than England."

"Do they have any Christmas boughs there, Mother?"

"Something better than boughs, my boy!"

"Mother, I'd like it, if God would let me, to go to heaven around by the way of England, so that I could see a Christmas bough just for once before I die."

At that moment the door was thrust in, and the boys, Robert and Rupert, clad in snow, entered the room. The mother, dropping Roger's mite of a hand, sprang to meet them with untold gladness in her eyes, that still looked beyond them in search of something more.

"Lucy's all right, mother!" cried Robert. "If it hadn't been for Mr. Hawley, though, and Richard Cooper, and the rest, we'd have had a night of it in the old cedar tree. We couldn't get a bit farther with the meal and Lucy; so we scooped out the snow in the big hollow, put Lucy in first, when we had made sure there wasn't a fox or anything inside; crawled in ourselves, with a big stick apiece to keep of enemies, and were getting very hungry and sleepy when a light flashed in our eyes."

"But where is Lucy?" interrupted Mrs. Olcott.

"Oh, they are bringing her! And, Mother, Mr. Hawley has been scolding us half the way home for going to mill on such a day. And we never told him that we had meal enough in the house to last till to-morrow. We took it brave."

"That's right, my good boys; but how did they find you?" Mrs. Olcott demanded.

"They didn't; we found them," cried Rupert. "They had a lantern, and we saw it; and then we made a dash after the light, and brought them back to the hollow. When they drew Lucy out, she was fast asleep, and as warm as toast, 'cause Robert gave her his jacket, and I tied my muffler on her, too."

THE RETURN.

"And she's fast asleep this minute, I do believe!" added Robert, as two vigorous young men entered,—one drawing the sled-load of meal and the other bearing Lucy in his arms.

From that night in November little Roger grew more and more away from the bleak New England life. It was evident to everybody who saw the sad that he was going to the shining shore,—although the little Puritan boy had never heard of its being a shining shore. He only knew things that were the reason he fell to thinking so much of the beautiful Christmas bough. He talked of it when awake, he dreamed of it when he slept, and he told his dreams and said, with tears on his cheeks, how sorry he was to awake and find he had n't seen it after all—and, oh, he wanted to so much!

The time of Christmas in that far, far away year drew near, and in all the land there was not a Christmas bell, a Christmas-tree, nor even a Christmas-gift.

"Mother," said little Lucy, as her little Roger was getting very near the heavenly land. A physician from Boston had come down and told her that the end must die. This brave little mother wished, oh, so much! to make her child happy, and his little heart was set on seeing a Christmas-bough before he died. She could not bear to tell the children, and she said to herself, "If I am punished for it as long as I live, Roger shall see a Christmas-bough." So she took her boys, Robert and Rupert, and little Lucy, out into the house one day, just a week before Christmas, and told them what she was going to do.

"Mother, mother!" exclaimed Robert, the eldest son, "they'll persecute you to death; they'll drive us into the wilderness; we shall lose our home and everything!"

"Remember, boys, your mother has been into the wilderness once, and she isn't afraid of that. We shall have the Christmas-bough! I am going up to Hawley Harbor. If the day is fine, and I'll fetch back some nice little trinkets for poor Roger. May be a ship has come in lately! one is expected."

The mother, clad in the scarlet cloak, Mrs. Olcott set forth for Boston. She had not been there since the day she went up to see the ship sail, with her husband on it—the ship that never filled the long, low kitchen with light. There was no need of a candle, as the

THE CHRISTMAS BUGLE.

Then everyone wanted to take a bit for the same sweet sake, until the young pine was stripped of its branches. But still it stood, like a hero at its post with candles burning and gifts hanging, until all but the little household had departed; and even then, the last candle was permitted to burn low and flicker out before a gift was distributed, so glad were the Olcotts in the presence of the one great gift that Christmas morn; so eager were they to be told every bit of the story, the wonderful story of their father's long, long voyage in a poor little storm-tossed and disabled ship, which at last he had been able to guide safely into port. His return voyage had been made in the very ship that Mrs. Olcott had prayed would arrive in time for her Christmas-tree.

That morning brought to Roger something better than Christmas-trees, better, if such a thing were possible, than the home-coming of the hero-captain—renewed life. It may have been the glad surprise, the sudden awaking in the bright presence of a real, live dressed, and well child, or it may be the shock of joy that followed the knocking and the shouts at door and window, or the more generous living that came into the little homes near Plymouth. Certain it was that Roger began to mend in many ways, to grow satisfied with bleak New England wind and weather, and to rejoice the hearts of all the Olcotts by the glad presence with them.—St. *Nicholas.*

A POEM FOR CHRISTMAS.

From countless belfrys on this day
And many tongues of old and young
The Christmas hymns are singing.

In temples filled with evergreens
Are tens of thousands kneeling,
And uttering words of thanks and praise
For God's unspeakable gift.

And yet how few of all the throngs
That woke this Christmas morn,
And join in glad thanksgiving
That Christ the Lord was born,

Have ever witnessed in their hearts
The birth that's from above?
The real advent of the Lord—
Of pure, unselfish love!—

Of love that finds its chief delight
In doing, serving, blessing—
Like His whose greatest glory is
In giving, not possessing.

When in the homes and in the hearts
Of all in Christian lands,
This love shall rule supreme, and bind
In one, with its strong bands,

The poor and rich, the weak and strong—
Earth's discords then shall cease!
Will be that song the angels sang
At the dear Saviour's birth.—H.

Condemned criminal—Mr. Sheriff, will you see that my body is accorded decent burial? Sheriff (coldly)—I'll see you hanged first.

First signs of love—When you see a girl standing on the sidewalk looking at the engagement ring in a jeweller's window.

The arrest of a criminal is usually guaranteed, at least there is a warrant for it.

A CHRISTMAS GARLAND.

What tho' they toil through all the years
With scarce a thought that heaven is near;
This for their Christmas prayer be said:
"Give us this day our daily bread."

"For that the bread above the lamb
In solemn sorrow, calling dumb?
No dainties ours to ask—instead,
"Give us this day our daily bread."

"No wan gives aught to us; the scourge
Of want must all our efforts urge;
"Twere mockery to pray as we are dead—
"Give us this day our daily bread!"

—John Paul Bocock.

CHRISTMAS.

The Day, and How It is Observed.

Leigh Hunt says: A Christmas day to be perfect, should be clear and cold, with holly branches in berry, a blazing fire, a dinner with mince pie, and games and forfeits in the evening. Love should be in perfection if you are very fine and fashionable. Neither, alas! can it be enjoyed by the very poor; so that, in fact, a perfect Christmas is hardly to be had till the progress of things has distributed comfort more equally. But, when we do our best, we are privileged to enjoy them unmixed, and charity gives us a right to hope. The commonest parlor or of Christmas (next to a lover who has to receive forfeits from his mistress) is the holiday school boy who springs up early like a bird darting hither and thither out of sheer delight, thinks of his mince pies half the morning, has too much of them ever to remember (pardon him once,) roasts chestnuts and cuts apples half the evening, is conscious of his new silver in his pocket, and laughs at every piece of mirth with a loudness that rises above every other noise. Next day what a peg-top will he not buy! what strings, what nuts, what gingerbread! And he will have a new clasp-knife, and pay three times too much for it. Sour oranges also will he suck, squeezing their cheeks into his own with staring eyes; and he will tell him they are not good for him—and let him go on.

A Christmas evening should, if possible, finish with music. It carries off the excitement without abruptness, and helps to repose over the conclusion of enjoyment.

Every nation has its own peculiar way of celebrating this auspicious day. Of the Italians we have the way the day is enjoyed in Merry England.

CHRISTMAS CEREMONIES IN ENGLAND.

If some parts of the English Christmas ceremonies were derived from Saturnalia, another was evidently of northern origin. In the evening the Yule-log, a huge block, was brought in the principal apartments, and the company gathered around the fire. What remains to modern times of Christmas gambols then commenced; and ancient Christian plays are still to be traced among them. Blind-man's-buff, hunt the slipper, the game of the goose, snap-dragon, push-pin, robinson, hot cockles, and other sports, dancing, etc., form the amusements of the younger part of the assemblage. In our land, also, appropriate festivities will not be wanting; and in many a household this night blind-man's buff and other festive games will speed the evening—while the grandsire, seated in his great arm-chair, with his grown up children and children around him, will gaze with delight upon the sparkling eyes and merry faces of the younger groups—until the amusements of the young, and the colloquies of the old are brought to a close by the clock, with its iron tongue and brazen voice proclaiming the hour of retiring. We are not aware, however, that anything s know among our country people of the yule-log or yule-song, but we can look back with pleasure upon many a Christmas festive scene, when the largest log that the best maple and hickory were selected for the Christmas fire, which, when the evening came,

"Went roaring up the chimney wide"

while the lads and lasses were tripping about with joyous faces, and the tale, the dance, and the game, the mince pie and the spice-bowl, rendered delightful by the approving smiles of delighted parents, completed the general satisfaction.

CHRISTMAS IN YORKSHIRE.

The festivities in Yorkshire have a decided English aspect. The nourishment of the inner man is a peculiarity in ways pronounced, in an Englishman's view of enjoyment. They are not so far wrong in this, for where happiness consists mainly of material things, what can so promote it as plenty of generous viands?

In Yorkshire the work of preparation commences some weeks before, and its sports and festivities continue for a month after the close of the new year. The poor of the parish visit all the neighboring farmers to beg corn, which is invariably given them, to the measure of a bushel each. Poor old women, called vessel-cup singers, go about from house to house, with a waxen or wooden doll, fantastically dressed, and sometimes adorned with an orange or rosy-tinged apple. With this in their hands, they chant a carol, invoke blessings upon the masters, mistresses, and little children of houses where they call. At eight o'clock on Christmas eve, the bells greet "Old Father Christmas" with a merry peal, the children parade the streets with drums, trumpets, bells, kettles, warming-pans, and shovels taken from their respective cottages. The yule-candle is now lighted. Supper is then served, of which one dish is invariably frummety, from the manner in which it is cooked. Yule-cake, one of which is always made for each individual in the family, and other more substantial viands, are likewise added. The Christmas pie is still a regular dish, and generally consists of a goose somewhat enlarged by the addition of half a dozen other fowls.

IN THE UNITED STATES FIFTY YEARS AGO.

Speaking of Christmas, the Niles Register of January 17, 1818, says:

"The different manner in which the anniversary of the Nativity is observed in different parts of the United States is worthy of remark. In Boston it seems to be partially observed on the 25th, by a recommendation in the public papers to abstain from business, and by some few shops and stores being closed, and business suspended as on a Sunday. The churches also were for the most part opened in the morning, and the afternoon was given to refreshment and mirth, being an almost universal holiday. The only daily papers published in the United States, northward of New York, are two at Boston,

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